

The Life of a Female Slave.

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Ever since the beginning of the United States, there have been many different times when a majority of the population discriminates against another part of the population. In the United States history one of the worst times that the population has discriminated against a minority group was when slavery was legal. Now, in the year 2008 there have been many different books that have been written about slavery and how women slaves were treated. In the book "Incidents In The Life Of A Slave Girl" it shows how women slaves were taken advantage of, treated as property, and subject to sexual advances.

One problem that women slaves encountered was that they were taken advantage of since they were slaves. Harriet learned this valuable lesson when her grandmother was asked by her mistress to loan her three hundred dollars, money that her grandmother had saved up over the years, promising to pay her [back] soon" (Jacobs, 9). As it turned out, Harriet's grandmother was never repayed for this loan, because "no promise or writing given to a slave is legally binding; for, according to Southern laws, a slave, being property, can hold no property" (9). Due to this lie that was told to her grandmother Harriet learned that slaves could easily be taken advantage of when her grandmother's mistress never repayed the loan.

The first few years of Harriet's life were pretty easy compared to other slaves during this time. Mainly, because she had a kind mistress that had been friends with Harriet's mother. Harriet's master allowed her to do house work like sew and when she was tired of sewing, she was allowed "to run and jump; and away she bounded, to gather berries or flowers to decorate her room" (10). This life that Harriet knew quickly changed when her "kind mistress sickened and died" (10). Harriet hoped and prayed that her dead mistress would have left her free in her will (10). "After a brief period of suspense, the will of her mistress was read, and we learned that she had bequeathed me to her sister's daughter, a child of five years old" (10). This one action shows exactly how both men and women slaves were treated back during this time. They were regarded as property and nothing more. The

master's of the slaves during this time did not have a care in the world about how the slaves felt, because if they did they would have let the slaves go free.

Another time during Harriet's life that has shown how women slaves were treated was when her grandmother's mistress died. Harriet's master "Dr. Flint , was appointed executor" of her grandmother's mistress estate (13). Her "grandmother's mistress had always promised he that, at her death, she should be free; and it was said that in her will she made good the promise" (13). However, "when the estate was settled, Dr. Flint told the faithful old servant that, under existing circumstances, it was necessary she should be sold" (13). Her grandmother was eventually sold to one of her dead mistress's friends who ended up setting her free. But this event also shows how women slaves were treated. They were not given any rights even if they were given them in a will. Harriet's grandmother was promised to be set free after her mistress death, but since the executor thought that she should not be set free he had the right to not set her free. So, again it puts emphasis on how slaves were only treated as property and not as an actual human.

Another issue that most female slaves dealt with was having to deal with being subject to sexual advances, or even being raped by their masters. In this instance, Harriet was not treated any different. Harriet's master told her that she "was his property, that [she is] subject to his will in all things" (26). Harriet went on to say that she "saw a man forty years [her] senior daily violating the most sacred commandments of nature" (26). The sad part about slave girls and being subject to these sexual advances and even rape was that "there [was] no shadow of law to protect [them] from insult, from violence, or even from death" (26). In other words, the master's of the slave girls could do anything that they wanted to do to the women and not have to worry about being charged with any crime. The law was set up that since these women were considered property, that they could be subject to any action that the master seems acceptable, even if that includes sexual advances and rape.

Within the history of the United States there have many times when an injustice has occurred

towards a minority part of the population. One of the worst times that an injustice took place was when slavery was legal. In the book "Incidents In The Life Of A Slave Girl" it shows how women slaves were treated. This book helps convey the message of the injustice that took place when slavery was indeed legal.

Works Cited

Jacobs, Harriet. Incidents In The Life Of A Slave Girl. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2001.